

JOURNAL

—OF—

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# The House of Representatives

OF THE

Library and Historical  
Commission  
Austin, Texas

STATE OF TEXAS,

BEING THE

FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTEENTH LEGISLATURE,

BEGUN AND HELD

TEXAS STATE LIBRARY

Austin, Texas

AT THE CITY OF AUSTIN,

APRIL 18, 1876.

3553

GALVESTON:

SHAW & BLAYLOCK, STATE PRINTERS.

1876.

Mr. Baker then arose, and in obedience to the wishes of the members and officers of the House, presented the Speaker, Hon. T. R. Bonner, on their behalf, with a cane, as a testimonial of their appreciation of his services and the esteem in which he was held by them.

Mr. Baker spoke as follows:

MR. SPEAKER—I am commissioned by the members and officers of the House of Representatives of the Fifteenth Legislature of the State of Texas to present to you the cane which I hold in my hand.

Under circumstances like these it will not be regarded as indelicate for me to mention, in moderate terms, some of the virtues we conceive you possess, and to give expression to our satisfaction with your conduct as our chief officer; which two considerations lead us to pay you this additional compliment. We assembled in this hall on the 18th day of April of the present year, with authority from the people of our several districts to act together, and in concert with the Senate sitting in the other end of the building, in the enactments of such laws as would be most beneficial to our young but growing and prosperous State and its people. It was necessary for us to select from our midst some one whom we could trust to preside over our deliberations, and by our ballots the position accompanied with its honors and encumbered with its responsibilities fell upon yourself. It is no mean compliment to be chosen Speaker of the Lower House of a Texas Legislature; neither are the labors and responsibilities attached to that high place of such a character as that they deserve only momentary consideration, as your own experience and our observation have learned us during the last four months. By our consent you have occupied the chair in this House

during the present session, and it now becomes us to say that you have borne your honors with modesty, and you have met your labors with industry and capacity, and your responsibilities with manhood; you have been an able, impartial, dignified, conscientious Speaker; and, in being that, have been an honor to this House which elected you to that place, and to the people who returned you to this body. While you have always been firm and determined in the discharge of your duties, nothing has been more noticeable in your official conduct than your forbearance and courtesy.

That you have been conscientious in all your actions, no one who has been observant will doubt; and that you have been able and dispassionate, we are all agreed. It is not our desire on this occasion to give expression to any sentiment that would appear fulsome and extravagant to the public ear, and I have endeavored to employ the use of such words only as would plainly convey our thoughts.

This body is now about to bring its labors to a close. In twenty minutes, your gavel will sound the termination of the only session our laws contemplate we shall hold, and we, who have become endeared to each other by close association, and by intimate connection in labors looking to the prosperity of our people and the advancement of our State, are about to separate, and each go to our homes and constituents. We will carry with us pleasant recollections of each other, and especially will we remember our Speaker with respect and friendship. Permit us, sir, to entertain the hope that you will take home with you like feelings for each of us. This cane, which I now send you as a present from the members and officers of this House, evidences our belief in the truthfulness of my remarks.

Mr. Bonner responded as follows:

*Gentlemen of the House of Representatives: :*

I accept, with grateful emotions, this mark of your favor, presented through the Honorable Mr. Baker, of Panola. When I recall the fact that through your partiality I was called to preside over the deliberations of this House at a time when I was comparatively unknown to many of you—that our session has been one of the most arduous ever assembled in the State—that questions of the most vital moment have been warmly advocated on the one hand and hotly contested on the other—that questions have been discussed and ruled upon, which were calculated to arouse sectional jealousies, and which stirred the most violent passions of members—that scenes have transpired in this House never before witnessed in a Texas Legislature—that in periods of the highest excitement, when contending parties were listening with eagerness to the rulings of the Speaker, and when an adverse ruling could hardly receive that calm construction to which it was entitled—when I recall these circumstances, it is highly gratifying to me to receive this expression of your confidence and respect. I trust, gentlemen, that in the years to come, no act of mine shall ever cause you to regret that you have thus honored me. I here proclaim, in the presence of this House and all these witnesses, that, to the best of my poor ability, I have honestly, faithfully and impartially discharged the onerous, delicate and responsible duties devolving upon me as the Speaker of this House.

You were assembled under a Constitution new and novel in many of

its most essential features. It was incumbent on you to change the existing statutes and make them conform to the new organic law, and to create such new laws as were necessary to put the machinery of the new government into successful operation. The changes in the new organic law made these duties more onerous and difficult than any which have devolved upon any other Legislature since the admission of the State into the American Union.

It is meet and proper that I, as your presiding officer, should bear testimony of your fidelity to the trust reposed in you, as the immediate representatives of the people. I know that some of the press of the State have sharply criticized your actions, but I take this occasion to publicly state that your labors will bear favorable comparison with those of any Texas Legislature which has preceded you. You have addressed yourself with a comprehensive patriotism and earnest devotion to the best interests of your people to the difficult task assigned you. You have labored with untiring energy in the performance of your duties. The laws you have created have been maturely considered, though many of them have been necessarily more lengthy than the Constitution under which they were formed. I feel assured that when the people shall become familiar with the results of your labors, and the vast amount of important work you have performed, the unfriendly criticism of the press will be retracted, and you will be applauded as workmen who have well performed your part. The older and more experienced members of the House are entitled to great credit for their counsel and conservatism in your deliberations, while the younger members have been marked for their zeal and for earnestness in the prosecution of your labors.

The only cause of regret is the unfortunate occurrence on the 31st of July. Let us bury the dissensions of that occasion and check the results likely to flow from it. Shall the dissensions of that day lead to a disruption of this great State? Shall the slumbering idea of division be awakened by the dissensions of that occasion? I know that a new impetus has been given to that subject; and it has occurred to me that a division of this State was inevitable—was but a question of time. I trust, however, that when you return to your homes, you will give no encouragement to this subject. Texas is to-day the grandest State in the Union, in territory, in climate and in natural resources; and, if it remains undivided, it will be the Empire State in this Republic in population before this century shall close. Will you aid in a division of Texas? I trust that our State shall never be divided. I look upon the full length portrait of Sam Houston, the founder of our Republic, and ask you who will claim his memory if we divide? To whom will belong the glories of the Alamo if we divide? The old Alamo building is in Western Texas; but, as an Eastern member, I am unwilling to surrender to the West the heritage of the deeds of daring and renown of that noble band of heroes, whose names are inscribed upon the monument which stands in the vestibule of this Capitol. If Texas be divided, which of the States shall claim the memories of San Jacinto, the field upon which our liberties were finally achieved? It has been said by a member of this House, whose seat is now vacant, that Texas is only held together by a sentiment. What a glorious sentiment is this that binds together the people of this great State! There is a sentiment connected with this question as dear to the heart of a

true Texan patriot as the memory of his mother, and I trust this sentiment shall always find a lodgment in the bosoms of this people. Look upon that painting suspended upon the wall of this House, behold the face of the immortal Lee, who was the central figure around whom clustered the hopes of the South for four long years. See Hood's old Texas Brigade, the noblest and bravest body of men who ever left Texas, and sacrificed their lives upon the altar of our common country. Remember that gallant charge upon the battle plains of the Wilderness, by which the fortunes of the greatest army of the South were saved; remember the glorious deeds of the troops of Texas in that great civil war, and then say to whom shall these hallowed memories belong! These memories belong not to the East or to the West, neither to the South nor the North, but they are the rich legacy of all the people of the whole State. If Texas can only be held together by a sentiment, then let us cherish that sentiment, avert division, and build up in our grand territory a State which shall exercise a controlling influence upon the destinies of the American Republic. I am led to these remarks by an earnest love and devotion to the best interests of our State. My whole life, from early boyhood, has been spent in Texas, and every pulsation of my heart beats in unison to her interest—not to Texas dissevered, but to a great, undivided State.

In conclusion, I am glad to see the good-will which exists at the close of this session among all the members. Let all the bitterness of the past be forgotten. For myself, I will ever cherish the associations I have formed here. You and each of you shall bear to your homes my earnest wishes for your future welfare and happiness, and I trust that your course here shall be civilly and politically approved by your people. I again return to you my thanks for the honor you conferred upon me in calling me to preside over your deliberations, for the kindly expressions contained in your resolutions passed to-day, and for the testimonial of your confidence this day presented to me. I ask no higher reward from those whom I have served than to possess their esteem, confidence and respect.

Mr. Cochran moved that the address of Mr. Baker in presenting the cane, and Speaker Bonner in accepting, be spread upon the journal.

Carried.

Mr. Kinnison offered the following resolution:

*Resolved*, That at this, the last hour of the business of the Fifteenth Legislature, that the members of this House do hereby tender each to the other, the warmest wishes for each other's welfare and future happiness; that we now discard from our minds any unpleasant or unfriendly sentiments in regard to matters of difference upon questions of public policy which have divided us so seriously during the session, and that as citizens of this great and growing State, regardless of local prejudices and preferences, we will use our utmost efforts to advance her future prosperity, and encourage the sentiments as much as in us lies, "that Texas shall be in the future as she is now: One, and undivided, now and forever."

Adopted unanimously by a rising vote.